

House alters northern districts

Chamber votes to return to 29 minority areas

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Mike Hasten

mihasten@gannett.com

BATON ROUGE — After heated debate, the House on Monday removed a new minority district in Shreveport that had been added in committee and granted Rapides Parish lawmakers' request to realign their districts.

However, the arrangement that state Rep. Chris Roy, D-Alexandria, worked out with 51-49 House approval could be in jeopardy today as state Rep. Frank Howard, R-Many, pushes an amendment that would undo the deal and alter other districts.

Howard's proposal will be first up when the House

convenes at 10 a.m. today to resume debate on House Bill 1 by Speaker Jim Tucker, R-Terrytown.

Newly elected state Rep. Alan Seabaugh, R-Shreveport, urged the House to remove the new minority district from the bill. He said the black population in Shreveport has not increased since the 2000 census, so the number of black districts should not increase.

Seabaugh said to the majority Republican House, with the adjustments required to implement the new district, "I'm not going to live in the district I was elected to represent."

The House voted 57-46 — not quite a straight partisan

split — to return Tucker's bill to the way it was filed with 29 minority districts.

District 3 state Rep. Barbara Norton of Shreveport joined white legislators in arguing to strip the new district. She said she was concerned that it weakened her district so much that she or any other minority couldn't get re-elected.

Democrats Bobby Badon of Carencro and Jim Fannin of Jonesboro and independent Joel Robideaux of Lafayette also voted with Republicans. Republican Brett Geymann of Lake Charles and independents Michael Jackson of Baton Rouge and Ernest Wooton of Belle Chasse voted with Democrats.